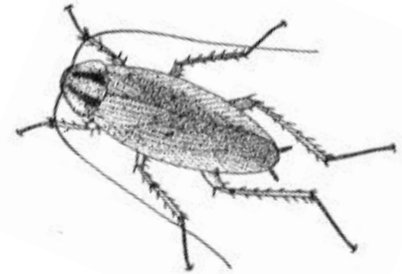


GERMAN COCKROACHES IN THE OFFICE

By far the most common pest problem in public and commercial building is cockroaches in offices. Not the big waterbug-type roaches which mainly live in basements, but the quick, little brown bugs which are call "German" cockroaches. (They didn't really come from Germany.) These insects can be found somewhere in almost every major office building and their existence in your working life revolves around the following three facts:



- Fact 1:** Our offices are where we live during the day. And where people live, there will be food. Eating at our desks, stashing munchies in drawers, putting out donuts next to coffee machines, etc. Eating and food storage may not be permitted in some areas, but are guaranteed to occur wherever they are not expressly forbidden. Rumor has it that eating sometimes occurs even where it is expressly forbidden.
- Fact 2:** Cockroaches need food. They've been around for millions of years, but that doesn't mean they've figured out a way to live on air. If they can't find food, they'll die. If they can't find moisture (which may be in the food itself), they'll die even quicker.
- Fact 3:** German cockroaches live very close to where they eat and drink. Surprising as it may seem, most places in office buildings are quite hostile environments for them – much too dry and too little food. Sure, they may be able to nibble on things like fabric and paper, but there's no way they will stay healthy if that's all they get. Once a roach decides to wander throughout a typical commercial building, its chances for survival are extremely low.

Time and again, one sees the combination of an office with a roach problem, some obvious food residue making those roaches fat, and office personnel who haven't made the connection! Even more amazing is that they think the answer to their problem is to have the exterminator come in and spray the baseboards! What effect will baseboard spraying have on roaches feasting on cookie crumbs in a desk drawer? None.

The unpleasant news, which nobody really wants to hear, is that the ultimate solution to roaches in office space lies with the people occupying that space. Pesticides can help, in the form of containerized bait. This is currently the preferred treatment for most office cockroach problems. Bait is applied in areas where the insect is living and breeding. (By the way, if you see smaller, immature roaches, it is a sure sign that you have located a breeding area.) But, if food and water continues to be available, even the most thorough and careful pesticide treatment can be totally sabotaged.

Here are the most common places in offices where roaches eat and drink. Do you really want to get rid of these pests or do you just want to complain about them? Read on.

AT RISK FOR ROACHES

1. Food Areas

These are the most obvious locations, of course. The normal daily spillage of coffee, sugar, and crumbs is usually more than enough to support a local population of roaches. If the spillage is allowed to build up, so will the pests.

Anything with an electric motor is potential roach habitat – they love the warmth and darkness. Add moisture from condensation or spillage, stir in a food residue, and you’ve got roach heaven. They even like to lurk in desk phones!

2. Sinks, Mops and Buckets

If you are bothered by roaches, think of water as your enemy – it’s usually the resource most in demand by them. Take a close look at nearby mop closets, water coolers, and other areas with moisture. Leaking faucets or pipe joints must be fixed. Mops and mop buckets must be rinsed and store dry, away from walls. Spilled or splashed water must be dried up.

3. Trash Cans

Cockroaches commonly dine at the bottoms of trash cans. The liners for these receptacles are typically not replaced until they’re practically shredded beyond recognition, so bits of food and coffee grounds gradually accumulate both on top and underneath the plastic. Even if it’s emptied after lunchtime, and innocent-looking trash can during the day may come alive at night as the roaches paw through the nourishing sediment.

4. Selected Desks

You wouldn’t be so foolish and irresponsible as to store food in your desk or locker that wasn’t tightly sealed, right? But what about scraps left over from the last time your judgment lapsed, or even left over from the desk’s previous occupant?

It is sad that a common response of office workers to management requests for cleanliness is to roll their eyes and mumble something about the situation being hopeless – as if a great amount of effort was being called for. It may not be the most enjoyable thing to do, but unless you take workplace food handling, storage, and disposal seriously, you’ll be putting up with roaches for the rest of your career.

To sum up, the foundation for effective pest control is proper sanitation, waste management, and structural maintenance. Control of cockroaches in office space depends primarily on the first item and it’s primarily up to the occupants, not the exterminator. There are three simple precautions to make part of the daily routine:

CLEAN UP – Paper towels are one of man’s greatest inventions.

STORE TIGHTLY – Metal, glass, and plastic containers with tightly fitting lids come in thousands of attractive and convenient shapes, sizes, and colors.

WRAP OR BAG FOOD WASTE – Don’t make roach refuges out of trash cans.

Contact your facility’s Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Coordinator for assistance.